



Imam al-Rāzī's Interpretation of "Two Hands"

Taken from *Asās al-Taqdīs*

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Released by www.marifah.net on the 12th of Rabī' al-Awwal, 1431

As for the saying of the Most High, *«What prevented you from prostrating to the one that I created with My Two Hands [yaday]?»*, we reply: The scholars have two opinions concerning this. The first view states that "Two Hands" [*yadān*] are two attributes subsisting with Allah's Essence, and that by the two, creation in the sense of honor and choosing [*iṣṭifā'*] occurs—as was the case for Ādam ﷺ.

Those who subscribe to this view put forward the following points as evidence: One, His statement, *«What prevented you from prostrating to the one that I created with my Two Hands»* gives the impression that He, the Exalted, only made Ādam the object of the Angel's prostration because He, the Exalted, created Him with His Two Hands. So if "Hand" was a word denoting power [*qudra*], the rationale for [Ādam being] the object of prostration would be shared among all of the creation and this ruling would necessarily apply to all; but since that is not the case, we know that *yad* is an attribute other than power.

Two, Allah's power [*qudra*] is one, whereas the word "Hand" is in the dual form. Third, His words, *«... created with my Two Hands»* indicate that he [Ādam] is unique in that he is created. Being uniquely mentioned rules out the same judgment applying to others beside him. Therefore, it is necessary that none of the creation beside Ādam should be created with [His] Two Hands—and undoubtedly they were created with power, which implies that the Hand is something else distinct from power.

The second view states that the word Hand here is power, and this is for several reasons. One, power denotes an attribute that qualifies the one described with it as being able to create and bring into being; bringing something from non-existence to existence. Since the one described with a Hand is like that, that meaning is the self-same power. Two, Allah's power is a pre-eternal attribute whose existence is necessary, hence it is necessary that it be linked to everything than can be subject to power [*maqdūr*], for if not, its need for specification in that would imply one who specifies it, but that which specifies something subject to power is contingent possibility, which entails that every possible thing is subject to Allah's power; and undoubtedly the existence of Ādam ﷺ is from the possibilities, which means that Ādam's existence is included in the linkages

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to Allah's power. Were we to assume for argument's sake that there is another separate attribute credited with bringing this contingent possibility into being, it would necessitate the gathering of two separate and independent causes upon one effect, and that is impossible. Three, there is no proof that affirms an attribute other than power that effectively brought Ādam into being, and affirming it is therefore impermissible due to the consensus that affirming an attribute for Allah without proof is unlawful.

The response to the first view is as follows: As for their first proof, [we say that] if the creation of Ādam with the Two Hands entailed an added "choosing" [*iṣṭifā*], then the creation of the beasts and cattle with Hands [*ayd*, in the plural form] would entail that they are superior to Ādam in this choosing, for Allah, the Exalted, said in description of their creation: **﴿Do they not see that We have created for them of what Our Hands have created, the cattle, so that they are their owners﴾**. Furthermore we say: why isn't it possible to say that His words **﴿. . . created with My Two Hands﴾** explain Allah's immense concern with creating him and bringing him into being? When someone wishes to emphasize the completion of important matters, he might say: "This is something I did with my own two hands." It is known that creation with other than this type of Divine concern is what occurred with other than Ādam ﷺ [i.e., that the other creation were not created with the same level of Divine concern].

The response to their second point is that the dual form is not necessarily quantitative, as proven in the words of the Exalted: **﴿Present charity before [bayn yaday] your private consultation﴾**, and **﴿And it is He Who sends the winds as heralds of glad tidings, going before [bayn yaday] His Mercy [rain]﴾**.

The response to their third view: We say that the special mention here does not rule out the same thing applying to other people. The creation with Two Hands is an expression that denotes a unique act of creation with extra nobility and honoring—and this applies to Ādam ﷺ and other than Ādam.

